

Senators who are filibustering and throwing sand in the gears to delay health care reform desperately need a reality check. It is ironic to me that members of Congress enjoy some of the best health insurance in the world through our government-administered health care, and yet so many are working overtime to deny quality care to Americans – using scare tactics to claim the “government is going to take over their health care.”

Well, for those Representatives and Senators who are so terrified of a government take-over, I say to them NO access to government run programs for you.

Members of Congress should not have access to taxpayer-funded health care when they are actively denying these very people quality care of their own.

So for the 150 members of Congress who qualify for Medicare, a single-payer government insurance plan, you get no access. For all members who are eligible for the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, no more. And no more access to the attending physician in the Capitol, either. Not until we pass the health insurance reform that millions of Americans so urgently need.

I share with you my open letter to members of Congress:

Dear Colleague,

I invite you to join me in sponsoring the *Health Care Reality-Check Act* which I will be introducing next week.

It has become clear that some of our colleagues lack proper perspective on the urgency of health reform because, ironically, as members of Congress we enjoy some of the best health security in the world through our government-administered health care:

- All Members of Congress are eligible - and most participate in - the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, which provides all federal employees with a government-negotiated insurance exchange that is subsidized by their employer: the Federal Government;
- Almost 150 Members of Congress qualify for Medicare, a single-payer government insurance plan;
- The 121 Senators and Representatives who served in our armed forces are eligible for the “socialized” health care we provide for all veterans; and
- Members who aren’t veterans can avail themselves to a similar “socialized” program – the Attending Physician in the U.S. Capitol, for an annual fee of around \$500.

These government-run health programs have successfully provided countless Senators and Representatives with life-saving medical treatments, but as we all know, most Americans don’t have this kind of protection.

Members of Congress should not have access to taxpayer-funded healthcare when they are actively denying these very people quality care of their own.

Congress needs a reality check.

In 2007, before the economy collapsed, 42% of all adult Americans under 65 were either uninsured or underinsured. Our dire unemployment rates and escalating health care costs have only made this situation worse. Today half of all American families delay seeking medical treatment because they have such a tenuous health insurance situation. Our colleagues do not fully appreciate the plight of 50% of our population, but we can help them understand.

Until health reform is enacted, Members of Congress should get to experience the tender mercies of our fragmented, complex, and exploitative health care system. My *Health Care Reality Check Act* terminates all government-administered health benefits for Members of Congress until comprehensive health reform is signed into law: no more Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, no Medicare, no VA, no attending physician in the Capitol.

Instead, Senators and Representatives may self-insure or they can rely on a spouse's company having employer-provided insurance, thus tying them - like millions of Americans- to the employment of a family member. Some will need to buy health insurance on the private market, exposing them to legal discrimination based on age and gender.

By personally dealing with rescissions, pre-existing condition exclusions, the fine-print of insurance contracts and the gaps in coverage from weak consumer protections maybe our colleagues can better grasp the urgency of our health care crisis.

If our own health security were linked to the success of health reform for all Americans, we will have a bill enacted within weeks, guaranteed. I urge you to cosponsor the *Health Care Reality Check Act* today.

To your health,

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress